



CPEC

Update on the Improving Teacher Quality Program

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The Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) program released Requests for Proposals in March for the next round of teacher professional development projects. The first RFP, Addressing the Achievement Gap in Middle Schools (AAGMIS), is for stand-alone grants similar to the 2008 projects that target the achievement gap in elementary schools. The second RFP, Teacher-Based Reform, or T-BAR, will fund four master grants for teachers to design their own professional development programs.

In April, ITQ staff held technical assistance meetings for potential proposers in Orange County and Sacramento. Forty-five partnerships submitted letters of intent for AAGMIS and nine others for T-BAR. By the May 28 closing date, 31 proposals for AAGMIS and five proposals for T-Bar were received. This is an increase from the 2008 competition, when 30 letters of intent were submitted, resulting in 23 proposals for projects.

The 2009 Competition

AAGMIS is similar to the 2008 initiative, which targeted the achievement gap in elementary schools. The 2009 projects seek to address at least one department in middle schools, and to integrate at least one additional department within the targeted school or schools. The projects must develop teacher leaders who can help turn around the schools and sustain the improvements after the ITQ funds are gone.

The T-BAR initiative aims to fund four regional master grants. The master grantees will recruit teams consisting of three to five teachers to compete for grants in their region. The teams will design their own professional development projects, supported by the resources of the partner university. Each master grant will fund 12 teacher teams at \$30,000 each over the two-year grant period. The teacher teams will be required to share their professional learning with other teachers in their schools. T-BAR master grantees must conduct research on the effectiveness of this approach.

The proposals are being reviewed by expert readers who will meet in July and determine which proposals should be given further consideration. Finalists will be interviewed in August. Funding recommendations will be forwarded to the Executive Director and final funding decisions should be announced in September. This two-step process earned CPEC a commendation from the U.S. Department of Education in 2005.

Current Projects

Work on current projects continues. Eight secondary academic literacy projects are in their fourth and final year, finalizing evaluation research and planning to disseminate results. Nineteen math and science teacher retention sites are in their third year. Eight K-2 projects are in their second year.

Six elementary grades achievement gap projects, targeted at whole schools, are starting their first summer of activities. ITQ staff visited two of these projects as well as several of the other projects. All projects are on schedule and meeting the goals stated in their proposals.

One challenge facing current projects is that some teachers enrolled in the projects have received layoff notices and may be unable to continue with program activities. ITQ staff are working with projects to resolve these issues to sustain as much participation as possible.

ITQ Program Administration

The position of ITQ program administrator has been vacant since March 1, 2009, when Karen Humphrey was appointed Executive Director of CPEC. The position has been advertised and applications are being accepted. ITQ continues with Director Humphrey's guidance available as needed, and the support of program coordinator Natalie Sidarous, graduate student assistant Kaytie Speziale, consultant Dr. Jason MacCannell, and members of the Assessment and Dissemination Team. Director Humphrey plans to represent California at the 2009 Title II-A National Meeting in Washington, D.C. in late June.

Scientifically Based Research Conference

This conference, planned for September, is a first for ITQ. The secondary academic literacy grants funded in 2005 are the first group of grants required to carry out a rigorous, scientifically based research project evaluating the impact of their work. These projects are concluding their fourth and final year which focuses on data analysis and dissemination of results. The researchers with the projects will present their findings, and their experiences will help subsequent ITQ grantees. Many project leaders from groups in the first round of grants have published preliminary findings and presented at the American Educators Research Association and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics conferences. When more projects are complete, CPEC will publish a small body of work for others in the field to use.

The ITQ Program continues to provide opportunities for universities and school districts to improve student achievement. The program funds grants to colleges and universities to help teachers in high-need school districts improve their content knowledge and classroom skills. ITQ has been operated by CPEC for over 20 years and is part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.